

1910
—2010
**contemporary
art society**



Six Month Curatorial Fellowship

Hosted by Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery.

Initiated by The Contemporary Art Society for
The Centenary Programme

The Bursary for the six month Fellowship: £9,000

The fee includes the delivery of the exhibition or public outcome that might be realised beyond the 6 month period.

Curatorial Practice and the Museum

Working with Collections of Modern and Contemporary Art.

The Contemporary Art Society will be celebrating its centenary throughout 2010. The Centenary Programme will include a range of events activities and opportunities that will take place in partnership with our sixty-three members museums across the UK.

Working closely with the Contemporary Art Society, Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery is offering a six month Curatorial Fellowship. We would welcome applications from curators who can bring fresh knowledge, thinking and ideas to the Visual Arts team at Nottingham Castle. The following information provides some background and context for this Fellowship.

Aims and Objectives of the opportunity:

The Contemporary Art Society has received support from Arts Council England to initiate three curatorial fellowships as part of the organisation's Centenary Programme. Two six month fellowships will be hosted within museums, the Fellows will work closely with the museum collections including developing strategy and new ways of working with and providing access to contemporary, modern and sometimes historic collections. The participating museums are the Herbert Museum and Art Gallery, Coventry and Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery. The third will be based within the offices of the Contemporary Art Society and will work with the team to generate an on-line facility for our museum members and to work with us to further develop the programme for the National Network.

The Fellowships, based within the collections, aim to bring new contemporary art, curatorial expertise right to the heart of the staff teams working within the museums. The initiative is designed to offer the Fellow curatorial experience of working with and planning the future of a public collection. This may relate to modern, contemporary and historic collections.

The Opportunity at Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery

Nottingham Castle is one of three venues that will host the *British Art Show 7*, in October 2010 – January 2011. The other venues include Nottingham Contemporary and New Art Exchange.

In order to accommodate the exhibition, we need to take down the permanent display in the Long Gallery, store it and then re-display it after the *British Art Show* in early 2011.

This moment provides us with an opportunity to step back and review our current practice. We would like the Curatorial Fellow to work with us over this period on four specific priorities and opportunities to:

1. Consider and propose how we might use our permanent and temporary display spaces in new ways.
2. Be involved in developing ideas for the re-hanging of the permanent collection in the Long Gallery, after *British Art Show 7*.
3. Be involved in shaping a Contemporary Art Collections Development Plan for the next five years.
4. Curate an exhibition for the 2011 programme, which encapsulates our vision for the development and use of our collections in future.

The Bursary

The bursary will be paid as a fee and in accordance with a negotiated contract with the Contemporary Art Society. There is an expectation that the Fellow will be registered self-employed.

Background to the Contemporary Art Society

'The Contemporary Art Society exists to develop the widest audience for contemporary art, and to support and develop contemporary art collections and collectors in the UK'.

The Contemporary Art Society was initiated in 1909, the name coined in 1910 at the inaugural meeting, the first works purchased in 1910. The organisation was established as a pressure group that actively supported younger artists over a sustained period. Founded by seven individuals: Roger Fry, artist, lecturer, critic and Curator of the Metropolitan Museums of Art in New York. DS McColl, keeper of the Tate Gallery (1906 to 1911). Charles J Holmes, Director of the National Portrait Gallery. Phillip Morrell, Liberal MP and his wife Lady Ottoline. Ernest March, expert in Martinware pottery and Charles Aitken, Director of the Whitechapel Art Gallery. McColl and Fry had also been instrumental in establishing The National Art-Collections Fund in 1903 to assist national museums to purchase mainly old masters

and furniture. The founders of CAS, particularly McColl and Fry saw that there was a role for an organisation to purchase more adventurous work from younger, living artists for national collections. Among the English artists CAS introduced to collections including Tate are; Walter Sickert, Augustus John, Vanessa Bell, Henry Lamb, Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill, Duncan Grant, Stanley Spencer, Lucien Pissarro, Paul Nash, Christopher Wood, Ben Nicholson, Ivon Hitchens, John Hoyland, Peter Blake, John Bratby, Francis Bacon, Lynn Chadwick, Cecil Collins, Allen Jones. There was also a separate fund for international works, Fry bought the first Gauguin to be gifted to Tate from his Post Impressionist show for £40.

The CAS has bought over 8,000 works over the last 100 years and in the last 20 has developed vital new models for collecting, most significantly this was achieved through the Special Collections Scheme (1997 to 2005). At this time the CAS was the recipient of the largest non building based capital arts Council Lottery Award. With this fund the organisation worked with fifteen museums in England and Wales and with museums in Scotland through the National Collecting Scheme for Scotland to purchase major contemporary works through a process of professional development and research.

Person Specifications for the Curatorial Fellow.

Knowledge and experience

- A specialist knowledge of Contemporary Art
- Three years minimum experience of working as a curator – some of this time within an institution or working within a mixed staff team
- Awareness of issues relating to audience development
- Experience of generating ideas through substantial research

Skills and Abilities

- Ability to work effectively on own initiative and as part of multi-disciplinary team
- Ability to lead on researching, developing and delivering projects as required
- Excellent communications skills and an ability to assist other professionals to learn from your experience.
- Well organised and able to work on several projects simultaneously
- Ability to work to tight deadlines
- Ability to interpret the work of contemporary artists and make often complex ideas clear to a wide audience
- Effective written communication skills.
- ICT skills sufficient to use a word processor and a database package
- Ability to initiate partnerships and develop networks with other related institutions as well as museum professionals and professionals in other fields related to contemporary art

Experience, Skills and Abilities that are Desirable

- Some awareness of the challenges, possibilities and opportunities presented when working with a public collections of contemporary art in a curatorial capacity
- Applicants must be able to show a sustainable interest in and dynamic sense of enquiry in to public collections of contemporary art.

Education

- A Postgraduate qualification in a related subject:- curatorial studies, contemporary art history or other related subject.

Or

- A substantial period working as a curator working within the specialism of contemporary Art.

How to make an application:-

We welcome applications from curators who have not had previous experience of working with collections, it is important however to demonstrate an interest in working with collections that could be sustained and developed throughout the Fellowship and beyond.

Please complete the application form provided. This Statement of Application should be structured around the following questions and take full account of the details provided within this pack and the person specifications.

1. How would you apply your existing curatorial research and current interests within the context of this Fellowship and the 4 main priorities and opportunities that have been set out in the job description.
2. What is your curatorial experience to date and how can you use this experience in your approach to the Fellowship
3. What project management and organisational experience have you had and how would you bring this to work within the staff team at The Castle.
4. Why is this an important opportunity for you and how would you use this experience in the future

Please also include an up to date c.v. no more than two sides of A4 and names of two referees.

Applications should be submitted by 5pm on **Monday 8 February** by email to:
nationalprogrammes@contemporaryartsociety.org.

The start date is negotiable, but is anticipated to be in September 2010.

Interviews will take place at Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery on Wednesday 17 February.

If you would like further information please contact:

Deborah Dean at Nottingham Castle

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Lucy Byatt at the Contemporary Art Society

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Background to Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery

The Building

Nottingham Castle provides a unique context for contemporary visual art in the East Midlands. Since the 19th century, when it was reputedly the first public art gallery outside London, it has lived in the public imagination as a place to see art of regional, national and, occasionally, international significance.

Perched on a promontory, looking out over the city, the Castle is in fact a 17th century Ducal Palace, built on the site of a medieval castle, gutted by fire in 1831 during public protest, left as 'a monument to the folly of the people' and then refurbished and reopened in 1878 as the first provincial art museum in the country.

The building contains a suite of high-grade temporary exhibition spaces, as well as the elegant Long Gallery where the Fine Art collection is displayed. The Castle grounds provide more informal settings for the siting of visual art and, indeed, the whole site – building, grounds, environment and collections – has the potential to be a catalyst for contemporary art activity.

Fine Art Collection

Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery has collected contemporary British art since its opening in 1878 and many of our most important works have been acquired as a result of far sighted purchasing by curators, from living artists.

The following extract from our *Collections Development Strategy* (updated in 2005) outlines our current criteria for acquiring contemporary art. We aim:

- To collect work representative of significant trends in progressive art practice and to reflect as comprehensively as possible the state of art in this country to contemporary and future audiences.
- To collect work which demonstrates thematic links with the historic collection and which engenders dialogue between past and present.
- To continue to build the collections of Fine Art Photography and Fine Art Textiles begun under the Contemporary Art Society's *Special Collections Scheme*.

Nottingham's Fine Art Collection is eclectic, ranging from medieval 'Nottingham' alabasters to contemporary photography and fine art textiles. There are over 800 oil paintings, with around 100 on display at any one time; the main display space is the 'Long Gallery' on the first floor. There are over 4000 works on paper which are displayed in short term rotating displays or can be seen by appointment. The collection is particularly strong in the work of local artists with international reputations: Paul Sandby, Richard Parkes Bonington and Dame Laura Knight.

The modern collection has some key works on display, many of them acquired through the CAS, including paintings by Walter Sickert, William Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Ben Nicholson, William Roberts, Alan Reynolds, Peter Howson and Helena Ben Zenou. The photography and fine art textiles collections are often included in temporary exhibitions and displays or can otherwise be seen by appointment; holdings include works by Caroline Broadhead, Grayson Perry, Shelley Goldsmith, Heather Belcher, Wolfgang Tillmans, Catherine Yass, Shirana Shabazi and Sam Taylor-Wood.

Display and Programming

In recent decades the Castle has built up an enthusiastic audience for contemporary art with its temporary exhibitions programme, which occasionally extends beyond the building in to the grounds outside. Increasingly, the permanent collection and the history of the site and building, are used as catalysts for programming art.

We tend to present fine and decorative art at the Castle in cross-disciplinary programmes and around broad themes, rather than chronologically. We find that visitors respond positively to the juxtaposition of historic, modern and contemporary work and work in different media. We also aim to provide opportunities for contemporary artists to respond to the collection and this is very much in the spirit of the Castle Museum & Art Gallery's founding principles: from its opening in 1878, its intention was that the City's collections should give inspiration to artists, makers and designers in local industry.

This approach, along with the historical context and atmosphere of the Castle site and building, means that we contribute something distinctive to the map of galleries in Nottingham – which include the Djanogly Art Gallery at Lakeside (University of Nottingham), the New Art Exchange (recently opened, purpose-built venue with a diversity-led programme), Moot Gallery and other, smaller, artist-led spaces and of course, the much-anticipated Nottingham Contemporary which will offer an international programme of contemporary art when it opens on 14 November 2009.

Challenges

With the exception of the photography and fine art textiles collections – which were developed significantly thanks to the Contemporary Art Society's Special Collections Scheme, the contemporary art presence within the overall Fine Art collection is relatively modest and eclectic. We are committed to developing our contemporary collections but we need a dynamic and strategic action plan, which will sit alongside the existing Collections Policy and help us to identify the most effective use of our limited acquisition funds, whilst strengthening our potential to attract additional funding.

The permanent display of the Fine Art collection is focused on the Long Gallery and the adjacent North Hall staircase. Both spaces are visually impressive, with imposing architectural features and natural light. The Long Gallery lends itself well to the display of sculpture, as well as paintings but is used extensively for school visits and as part of the Museum's Corporate Hire 'offer' - so there is a need to balance competing priorities for the space at different times of year. The degree of natural light in both spaces, makes them unsuitable for the display of textiles and works on paper (aforementioned strengths of the contemporary art collection).

(The Long Gallery leads visitors directly in to a suite of three temporary exhibition galleries. These have no natural light and so the photography and fine art textiles collections are shown here in occasional temporary exhibitions – both specific to each media and in cross-media group shows.)

The Visual Arts and Exhibitions team is small and so there is limited time to research exhibitions, or to step back from the day-to-day challenges of delivering a busy programme. As we develop in the future we must consider what impact these issues are having on our vision for the future development of the contemporary art collection and its use and presentation. We must consider too what changes we can make to the way we work that will free up the potential of the spaces for all our collections.

